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ABSTRACT

A study examined a program entitled "Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading" (S.O.A.R.), which provided early intervention to accelerate literacy learning for at-risk students completing kindergarten through grade 2 in 2000-01. Subjects were 2188 students enrolled in 12 S.O.A.R. campuses. Ethnicity was diverse with 58% Hispanic Americans, 20% African American, 20% Anglo Americans and others, and 2% Asian. A total of 159 teachers taught in this balanced literacy program, which included reading aloud, shared reading, word study, guided reading, independent reading, and writer's workshops. Results indicated that: (1) 87% of all students showed improvement by advancing one or more reading levels; (2) 37.8% gained one text reading level, 29.3% gained two levels, 12% gained three levels, and 8% gained four of more text reading levels; (3) 525 students began the program below grade level in reading and ended the program at or above grade level; (4) parents were very supportive of the program; and (5) there was overall agreement by S.O.A.R. teachers, principals, and program managers that the students benefited from the intense summer program schedule and the high quality curriculum. Recommendations include monitor the program in 2002 for achievement gains in reading, and improve policies and procedures to maximize teaching and learning. (Contains 9 figures, 7 tables of data, and 11 references; appendixes contain the number of students who attended S.O.A.R. 2001, by school and by area; reading levels; teacher, mentor teacher, and principal comments; S.O.A.R. teacher survey; and mean responses to parent survey by language, 2001.) (RS)

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Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading (S.O.A.R.) Evaluation, 2001

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Executive Summary

The *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading* (S.O.A.R.) 2001 program was Austin Independent School District's summer reading program for students completing kindergarten through grade 2 in 2000-01. The purpose of the S.O.A.R. program, in its fourth year, is to provide early intervention to accelerate literacy learning for students who are at risk of retention and/or below grade level in literacy skills. The focus of the instruction is balanced literacy.

In June 2001, the 19-day program served 2,188 students (2,406 in 2000) at 12 S.O.A.R. campuses. Reading instruction was provided by 159 AISD teachers who attended professional development for 1-1/2 days as part of the S.O.A.R. summer program. Sixty-seven (42%) teachers had taught in the S.O.A.R. program during a previous summer. The allocation for S.O.A.R. 2001 came from local and state funds. AISD used part of the state Accelerated Reading Instruction grant money and local dropout prevention funds to fund S.O.A.R. 2001 with a total of $1,258,187.

The following are facts about the S.O.A.R. 2001 program.

- The grade distribution was 26% kindergarten, 45% grade 1, and 29% grade 2.
- The ethnic distribution was 58% Hispanic, 20% African American, 20% Anglo/Other, and 2% Asian.
- S.O.A.R. 2001 served special needs students: 27% were LEP (limited English proficient) and 18% were special education students.
- Reading instruction was offered in English (78% of students) and Spanish (22% of students).
- Seventy percent of the S.O.A.R. students were from Title I schools.
- Thirty-four percent of the students who preregistered for S.O.A.R. 2001 did not attend.
- The overall estimated attendance rate for S.O.A.R. was 84%.
- A total of 608 (28%) students attended S.O.A.R. for all 19 days.
- The average number of days in attendance for S.O.A.R. 2001 was 15.9.
- The overall pupil-teacher ratio was 14:1.
- Among S.O.A.R. teachers, the average number of years teaching experience was 7.3 years.

Major Findings

Program effectiveness for S.O.A.R. was measured using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA). Although the district has not prescribed a particular DRA level for the end of kindergarten, there is a DRA level that correlates to students being on grade level at the end of kindergarten (level 2), at the end of first grade (level 16), at the end of second grade (level 28), and at the end of third grade (level 38). DRA scores for S.O.A.R. 2001 students reveal the following information:

- During the 19-day S.O.A.R. program, 87% (92% in 2000) of all students with valid pre- and posttest scores (n=1,867) showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA. The average gain in 2001 was 1.7 text reading levels with a range from 0 to 13 levels. The 2001 average text reading level gain is slightly lower than in S.O.A.R. 2000 (2.1 text reading levels), which was a 21-day program.
- Among students with valid pre- and posttest scores, 37.8% gained one text reading level, 29.3% gained two levels, 12% gained three levels, and 8% gained four or more text reading levels during S.O.A.R.
- Of the 142 students who pretested at Level A (the lowest level), only 30 remained at this level at the end of S.O.A.R.
- A total of 525 students began the program below grade level in reading and ended the program at or above grade level based on DRA scores. This represents 75% of kindergarten (n=189), 25% of grade 1 (n=182), and 32% of grade 2 (n=154) students who began S.O.A.R. below grade level in reading.
- A total of 781 S.O.A.R. 2001 students have attended the S.O.A.R. summer school more than one year. A review of test data for the students who attended S.O.A.R. for multiple summers who were below grade level in the first year of S.O.A.R. shows the following: 35% (n=220) of the students who attended S.O.A.R. for two years were reading at or above grade level by the end of the second year of S.O.A.R.; and 28% (n=13) of the students who attended S.O.A.R. for three years were reading at or above grade level by the end of the third year of S.O.A.R.

In addition, parents, teachers, principals, and program managers were asked for input about improvements to operational and procedural aspects of the S.O.A.R. program that could impact teaching and learning. The S.O.A.R. 2001 program was housed at the same campuses and was supervised by the same principals as the new SUCCESS reading and mathematics summer program for grades 3-5. Therefore, many of the comments made by program facilitators reference the SUCCESS program. Suggestions for improvements to the S.O.A.R. 2002 program include the following.

- According to the parent survey, parents were very supportive of the S.O.A.R. program. Ninety-six percent of parents who responded to the parent survey (n=981) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The S.O.A.R. program was good for my child." However, some parents asked for more information about program structure, curriculum, expectations of parents/students, and student progress during S.O.A.R. In addition, many parents asked that the program be longer to extend instructional time (e.g., longer hours, more days, more weeks).
- There was overall agreement by S.O.A.R. teachers, principals, and program managers that S.O.A.R. students benefit from the concentrated, intense summer program schedule and the high quality curriculum by making academic progress in reading. However, S.O.A.R. staff and program facilitators cited many areas in need of improvement for S.O.A.R. 2002 including the following: application form; registration process; coordination with SUCCESS program managers; coordination with other central office departments; policies and procedures; and professional development.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The S.O.A.R. program has grown and evolved during its four years of existence. The program has proven successful for a large majority of the 6,000 students who have attended during its four years of operation. Students have consistently shown progress in reading during the program. An additional benefit is that S.O.A.R. teachers receive professional development and hands-on learning in balanced literacy that they can use in their classrooms throughout the year.

Teachers, principals, parents, mentor teachers, and project managers have given feedback about the many strengths of the S.O.A.R. program as well as suggestions for improvements to future summer programs. The following recommendations about improvements that could make the program even better as S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS continue in summer 2002 are offered based on comments that were consistent across teacher, principal, and program manager surveys and interviews. (Note: At the current time, staffs from both programs are planning together and have begun work on many of the operational and procedural recommendations for the 2002 program.)

1. *Monitor the S.O.A.R. program in 2002 for achievement gains in reading.* While the 2001 DRA data showed student progress in reading, the average gain in text reading levels and the overall percentage of students advancing one or more levels was less than in previous years. Therefore, it is recommended that the DRA results for the 2002 S.O.A.R. program be evaluated to closely monitor achievement for students in kindergarten through grade 2. In addition, evaluation staff should follow up on prior S.O.A.R. participants and matched student groups using academic measures such as TAAS reading to determine if there are long-term benefits from participation in S.O.A.R.
2. *Improve policies and procedures of S.O.A.R. to maximize teaching and learning.* In response to the input from S.O.A.R. teachers and principals, the following suggestions for improving the operations and procedures for S.O.A.R. 2002 are offered:
    - *Coordinate effectively with the SUCCESS program managers.* According to principals and teachers, program managers of summer elementary programs need to communicate better about policies and procedures when planning for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS in 2002. Because one principal oversees both programs at a campus, there needs to be consistent policies and procedures for both programs. Principals expressed a need to treat all students and teachers at their summer school site equally. During 2001, there were some problems such as inconsistencies in attendance, discipline, incentives, class size, and support personnel that contributed to unequal circumstances for students and staff at campuses. In addition, teachers and principals suggested that there should be one contact person for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS (also recommended in 2000) to ensure consistency.
    - *Coordinate effectively with other central office departments.* The major complaint by teachers and principals in 2001 was that materials and supplies were not available at the beginning of S.O.A.R. This was the result of miscommunication and/or a lack of communication between curriculum staff and finance department staff. All operational procedures have to be in place

for ordering and receiving of materials, hiring teachers, and transporting students. In addition, some of the problems with coordination may have been due to the fact that most of the program managers were new to summer school planning in 2001.

- *Develop a policies and procedures manual for S.O.A.R. teachers and principals available prior to the beginning of the summer program.* As in 2000, teachers and principals requested a manual that would include specific information about classroom procedures, employment issues, eligibility requirements, attendance and behavior policies, and registration deadlines. With the addition of the SUCCESS program to the summer site, it is even more important to have written policies to guide decision making.
- *Restructure professional development and add more rigorous and in-depth training.* As in 2000, teachers, mentor teachers, and principals offered many suggestions for changing the training model, but said that the training should be consistent for all grade levels. With 42% of this year's S.O.A.R. teachers having previous S.O.A.R. teaching experience, it is important to challenge these teachers with more in-depth and rigorous training.
- *Revise the application forms to include information about special needs and language of instruction to improve staffing and student placement.* Valuable teacher time was required this year to determine special needs and LEP status of students. There were cases this year where students were referred inappropriately to S.O.A.R. (i.e., severe physical or emotional needs). Communication with directors of the bilingual and special education programs is necessary to ensure that students who are referred to S.O.A.R. will benefit from the fast-paced program. Instruction will go more smoothly if teachers and principals are aware of special needs situations in advance.
- *Revise the registration process.* The on-site registration that occurred the first day of S.O.A.R. needs to be revised. Questions will need to be answered about the use of the new district data system (SASI) for summer 2002 programs. Some of the problems associated with registration included inaccurate enrollment estimates, errors in numbers of staff hired, and a lack of enough information on student needs (e.g., bilingual, special education). Recommendations made by program facilitators focused on having a registration deadline, a late registration day prior to summer school beginning, more complete information provided on registration forms, and in some cases separate registration forms for those children with special needs. In addition, the district must ensure that students are identified for S.O.A.R. and parents are notified in a timely manner to allow easy access for all eligible students.

The data indicate that the structure of the S.O.A.R. program can withstand change and growth and still be an effective reading intervention. The program should focus on providing reading intervention to those early elementary students who are below grade level in reading. Training, supervision, and materials need to be of utmost quality to accomplish this goal.

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Monique Boitnott, *Govalle*
Luiz Lazaro, *Graham*
Kathy Noack, *Joslin*
Ana Caballero, *Linder*
Karen Davis, *Mathews*
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Gloria Arredondo, *Reilly*
Jenna Sanders, *Sims*
Rhoda Gardner, *Winn*

The mission of the S.O.A.R. program is to provide early intervention to accelerate literacy learning for primary students in an effort to meet the district and state goal that all students read at or above grade level upon exiting third grade.

To accomplish this goal and ensure that significant student progress is achieved, S.O.A.R. will focus on balanced literacy utilizing materials specifically designed to complement each student's individual reading level.

The S.O.A.R. 2001 program served 2,188 kindergarten through grade 2 students who were in need of reading intervention. The average gain for all students who attended the program was 1.7 text reading levels (approximately 1/4 to 1/2 year of growth in reading) as determined by the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA). During the 19-day program, 87% of all students with a valid pre- and posttest score showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA.

INTRODUCTION

The *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading* (S.O.A.R.) 2001 program was Austin Independent School District's summer reading program for students completing kindergarten through grade 2 in 2000-01. The purpose of the S.O.A.R. program, in its fourth year, is to provide early intervention to accelerate literacy learning for students who are at risk of retention and/or below grade level in literacy skills.

The focus of the instruction is balanced literacy. Elements of a balanced literacy reading program are reading aloud to children, shared reading and writing, interactive writing, word study, guided reading, and independent reading. Curriculum specifically designed to complement individual reading levels is provided. While teachers work with some students in guided reading groups, other students are involved in learning through literacy centers. S.O.A.R. teachers and administrators participated in 1-1/2 days of professional development in using the balanced literacy approach to improve reading achievement at the beginning of the program.

The 2001 S.O.A.R. program was offered at 12 elementary sites (Blackshear, Govalle, Graham, Joslin, Linder, Mathews, McBee, Palm, Pleasant Hill, Reilly, Sims, and Winn) from June 4 – June 28, 2001. Funding for the 2001 S.O.A.R. was provided by the state Accelerated Reading Instruction (ARI) grant for kindergarten and grade 1 students and local dropout reduction funds for grade 2 students. Staff provided for the summer included campus principals, classroom teachers, mentor teachers, nurses, monitors, and secretaries as well as districtwide support personnel.

Initial eligibility for S.O.A.R. was based on students' January 2001 scores on the *Texas Primary Reading Inventory* (TPRI) for kindergarten and the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) for grades 1 and 2. Eligibility was reevaluated after the April administration of the assessments. All kindergarten through grade 2 students who were identified as at risk of retention and/or below grade level in reading were eligible to attend S.O.A.R. 2001.

In addition to S.O.A.R., AISD offered a new summer program, SUCCESS, for students completing grades 3-5 during 2000-01 who needed acceleration in reading and mathematics and/or were at risk for retention. The SUCCESS program was housed at the 12 S.O.A.R. campuses and shared some of the same campus support (principal, mentor teachers, clerk, nurse, lunchroom monitors). Comments by teachers and principals shared later in this report will address both the S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS programs. (See the Optional Extended Year Report 00.07 from the Office of Program Evaluation for more information about the SUCCESS program.)

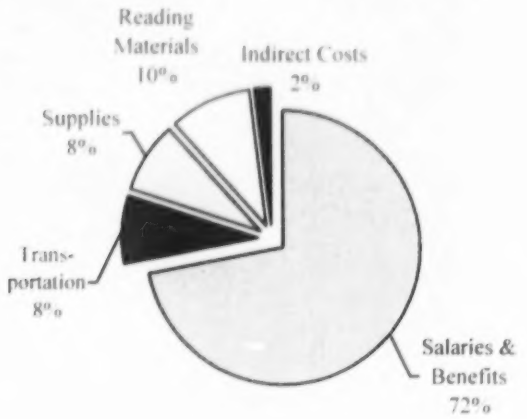
A Look at the Numbers

S.O.A.R. 2001 Budget

The allocation for S.O.A.R. 2001 came from local and state funds. AISD used $927,870 of the state *Student Success Initiative,* Accelerated Reading Instruction grant to fund S.O.A.R. 2001. These funds were used in the program for kindergarten and grade 1 students at regular-calendar schools who did not show adequate progress in reading development and who were at risk for reading difficulties. In addition, local dropout prevention funds of $330,317 were used for grade 2 teachers ($230,317) and transportation of S.O.A.R. students ($100,000). Therefore, a total of $1,258,187 directly supported S.O.A.R. 2001. In addition, $145,432 in local dropout prevention funds were shared on summer school campuses for both the S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS students in the following areas: health services, reproduction, reading materials, general supplies, refreshments, and fees and dues. Prorating the dropout funds per student, $81,567 would have been available for the S.O.A.R. program for a total of $1,339,754 that supported the 2001 S.O.A.R. program.

The largest expenditure (72%) was salaries and benefits ($904,983) for principals, teachers, mentor teachers, clerks, monitors, and district support staff. Figure 1 shows the percentages of the budget, which were allocated directly for S.O.A.R.

Figure 1: 2001 S.O.A.R. Budget*



* This does not include the funds shared with the SUCCESS program ($145,432).
Source: AISD Grant Manager for S.O.A.R.

The total Accelerated Reading Instruction grant to AISD for kindergarten and grade 1 students needing reading intervention was $1,285,060. Two other programs, the eight year-round schools and the LEP (limited English proficient) summer program, that served kindergarten and grade 1 students who did not show adequate process in reading development during 2000-01 benefited from the ARI grant. Thus, additional ARI funds were allocated as follows:

- $257,275 to the LEP program for kindergarten students who attended the LEP summer reading program. (See the Bilingual/ESL Report 00.12 from the

Office of Program Evaluation for more information about the LEP summer program.)

- $99,914 to the eight year-round campuses for kindergarten and grade 1 students who were having reading difficulties. (See the Optional Extended Year Report 00.07 for more information.)

Student Demographics

A total of 2,188 students attended S.O.A.R. 2001. Students from 64 of the 73 regular-calendar elementary schools attended S.O.A.R. 2001. The eight year-round campuses also were in session in June. See Appendix A for a list of the numbers of students attending S.O.A.R. 2001 from each of the elementary schools. In 2002, there will no longer be year-round schools, which will allow all students to participate in the district summer reading programs. The largest percentage of S.O.A.R. 2001 students were in grade 1 during the 2000-01 school year. The grade distribution during S.O.A.R. 2001 was 26% kindergarten, 45% grade 1, and 29% grade 2. In 2001, there was an increase in the number of kindergarten students and a decrease in the number of grade 1 and 2 students attending S.O.A.R. The number of students for S.O.A.R. 2001 and 2000 are listed by grade in Table 1.

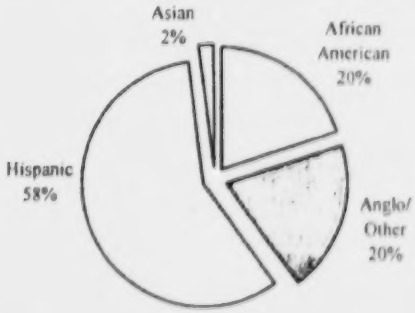
Table 1: Number of S.O.A.R. Students by Grade, 2000 and 2001

Grade in 2000-01	S.O.A.R. 2001 Students	S.O.A.R. 2000 Students
Kindergarten	563	529
Grade 1	994	1,131
Grade 2	631	746
Total	2,188	2,406

Source: AISD S.O.A.R. Data, 2000 and 2001

The ethnic distribution was diverse with 58% Hispanic, 20% African American, 20% Anglo/Other, and 2% Asian students. S.O.A.R. 2001 also served special needs students: 27% were LEP and 18% were special education students. Seventy percent of the S.O.A.R. students were from Title I schools. Figure 2 shows the ethnicity of S.O.A.R. 2001 students.

Figure 2: Ethnicity of S.O.A.R. Students, 2001



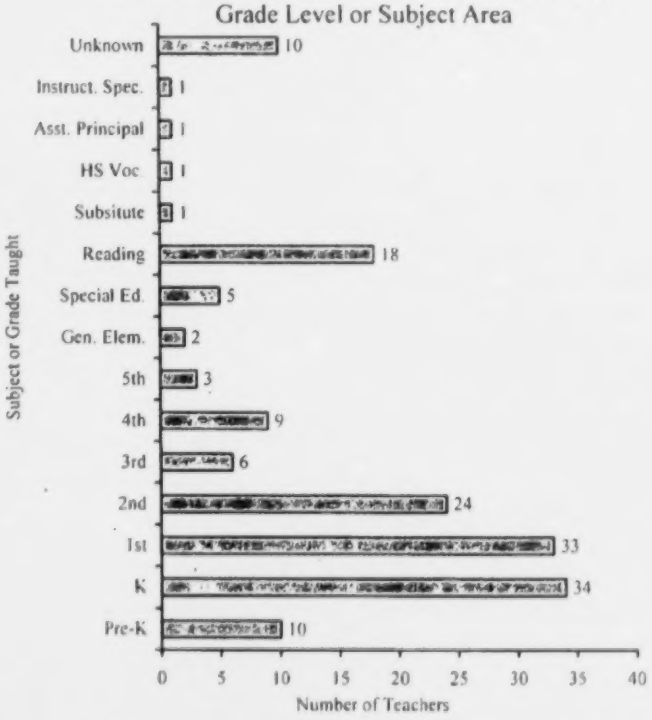
The population of students varied across the campuses. The largest population of Asian students was at McBee (8%), African American students at Sims (47%), Hispanic students at Linder (83%), and Anglo/Other at Pleasant Hill (46%). Walnut Creek had the most students attend S.O.A.R. in 2001.

Teacher Demographics

In 2001, 159 teachers participated in classroom instruction for S.O.A.R.; 25% at grade 1; 45% at grade 2; and 29% at grade 3. The ethnicity of the teaching staff was 56% Anglo/Other, 31% Hispanic, and 13% African American. Ninety-four percent of the teachers were female. Thirty-three teachers were certified in bilingual education and eight were certified in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction.

The majority of S.O.A.R. teachers (67%) taught in prekindergarten through grade 3 classrooms during the school year. These are the grades that are focusing on early intervention to meet the goal that all students will read at or above grade level by the end of grade 3. Eighteen reading teachers added their expertise to the program. The largest numbers of teachers taught kindergarten and grade 1 during the regular school year. Figure 3 shows the number of teachers by grade or subject taught during the 2000-01 school year. Sixty-seven (42%) teachers had taught in the S.O.A.R. program during a previous summer.

Figure 3: Number of S.O.A.R. 2001 Teachers by Grade Level or Subject Area



The average number of years teaching experience was 7.3 years. The majority of the teachers (56%) had five years or less of AISD teaching experience. The distribution of experience teaching is as follows:

- 0-5 years – 56%;
- 6-10 years – 17%;
- 11-20 years – 21%; and
- 20+ years – 6%.

The overall pupil-teacher ratio was 13.8 students to each teacher, slightly lower than the 2000 ratio of 14 to 1.

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ATTENDANCE

A total of 3,331 students preregistered to attend S.O.A.R. 2001. The actual number of students who attended at some time during the program was 2,188, which indicates that an estimated 34% of the students who registered for S.O.A.R. did not attend. The actual percentage of "no-shows" is likely to be higher than 34% because students were allowed to register at the campus and would not be included in the preregistration number. Currently, no information is available about why some students who were registered never attended the program.

A daily attendance count was reported by all 12 sites. Because summer programs do not use the AISD attendance files, the attendance numbers were calculated using average daily attendance and the overall enrollment. With an enrollment number of 2,188 and an average daily attendance of 1,828, the overall estimated attendance rate for S.O.A.R. was 84% (86% in 2000). This number may be underestimated because students' date of withdrawal was not included in the data collection. This 2001 S.O.A.R. attendance rate is much lower than the average attendance of 95.7 for AISD elementary students during the 2000-01 school year.

Seventy-eight percent (n=1,708) of the students were in attendance on the first day of S.O.A.R. Students were enrolled as late as the end of the second week, however, 99% of the students were in attendance by the end of the first week.

A total of 608 (28%) students attended S.O.A.R. for all 19 days of the program. The average number of days in attendance for S.O.A.R. 2001 was 15.9. The largest campus was Pleasant Hill with 286 students and the smallest campus was Govalle with 86 students. Table 2 shows the numbers of students enrolled, average daily attendance, and daily attendance percentages for the 12 campuses.

While a ratio of 18 students to 1 teacher is allowed at S.O.A.R., many teachers have smaller classrooms because of "no shows." While the average class size in 2000 was 14 students, 43% of classrooms had from 15-19 students (55% of bilingual and 40% of English language classes). Pleasant Hill had the highest overall pupil-teacher ratio of 16 students to 1 teacher while Reilly had only one class of 15 students.

Table 2: S.O.A.R. 2001 Attendance

School	# Students Enrolled	Average Daily Attendance	Daily Attendance %*
Blackshear	96	91	95
Govalle	86	71	83
Graham	236	191	81
Joslin	227	194	85
Linder	171	142	83
Mathews	93	80	86
McBee	234	210	90
Palm	236	190	81
Pleasant Hill	286	221	77
Reilly	154	133	86
Sims	139	116	83
Winn	230	190	83
Total	2,188	1,828	84%

* Estimated attendance rate

Program Effectiveness

The assessment instrument used in the S.O.A.R. program was the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA). The DRA, used with kindergarten through third-grade students, is administered during a one-on-one conference as children read specially selected assessment texts. The DRA test procedures incorporate the work of Dr. Marie Clay, founder of Reading Recovery, including the use of running records. DRA reading levels are presented by grade level in Appendix B.

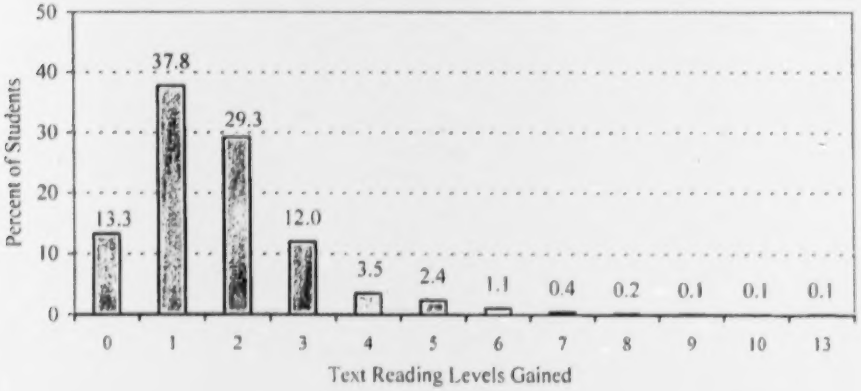
The DRA assessment texts represent a range of text reading difficulty (20 levels on a scale from A through 44). The running record is administered as the pre- and posttest to determine a student's text reading level and to plan for instruction. Text reading levels reported for the DRA assessment were taken at the instructional level (90% accuracy rate). When interpreting the results of the DRA, it is advisable to take into consideration that the running record is a somewhat subjective measurement because the teacher must interpret the student's actions.

Eighty-five percent (n=1,867) of the S.O.A.R. students had valid pre- and posttest scores. Both English language and Spanish language students were included in these comparisons. The sources of all the data used for the evaluation of program effectiveness are the AISD S.O.A.R. data files for 2001 and for the three previous years.

Increase in Text Reading Level

By completing a pre- and posttest with the DRA, it was possible to determine reading improvement during S.O.A.R. During the 19-day S.O.A.R. program, 87% of all students with valid pre- and posttest scores (n=1,867) showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA. Students with valid pre- and posttest scores showed an average gain of 1.7 text reading levels, with a range from 0 to 13 levels. As shown in Figure 4, among the students who have a valid pre- and posttest score, 37.8% gained one text reading level, 29.3% gained two text reading levels, 12% gained three text reading levels, and 8% gained four or more text reading levels during S.O.A.R. However, 13.3% of S.O.A.R. made no measurable progress on the DRA.

Figure 4: Percent of S.O.A.R. 2001 Students With Valid Pretest and Posttest Scores Who Made Text Reading Level Gains of 0-13 on the DRA



Advancement from the lowest level (Level A) to a higher level during S.O.A.R. was achieved by 79% of all students who started at Level A. Of the 142 students who

pretested at Level A, only 30 made no measurable gain by the end of S.O.A.R. Many of the Level A students were reported by teachers as being below level A (i.e., having limited letter knowledge and phonemic awareness) at the pretest.

Increase in Stage

There are four stages of literacy identified by the DRA – emergent (levels A 1, 2) early, (levels 3, 4, 6, 8, 10), transitional (levels 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 24), and extending (levels 28, 30, 34, 38, 40, 44). This DRA continuum enables the teacher to document each reader's development over time. It is more difficult to advance from one stage to another than it is to move from one level to another, especially if the student started at the lowest level in a given stage. A total of 678 (36%) students advanced one or more stages. The majority of students (n=1,189), however, advanced by less than a full stage measured by the DRA.

Figures 5-7 show the percentages of students at each stage by pretest and posttest scores. The graphs show that at each grade level, as the percentages of students in the lower stages decrease from pre- to posttest, the percentages of students at the higher stages increase. These results provide evidence of reading gains for S.O.A.R. students.

Figure 5: Percentage of Kindergarten S.O.A.R. Students at Each Stage at Pretest and Posttest, 2001

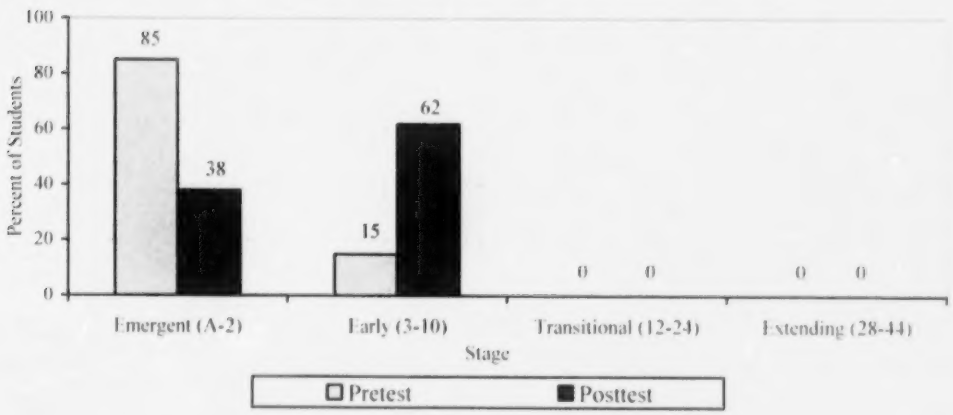


Figure 6: Percentage of Grade 1 S.O.A.R. Students at Each Stage at Pretest and Posttest, 2001

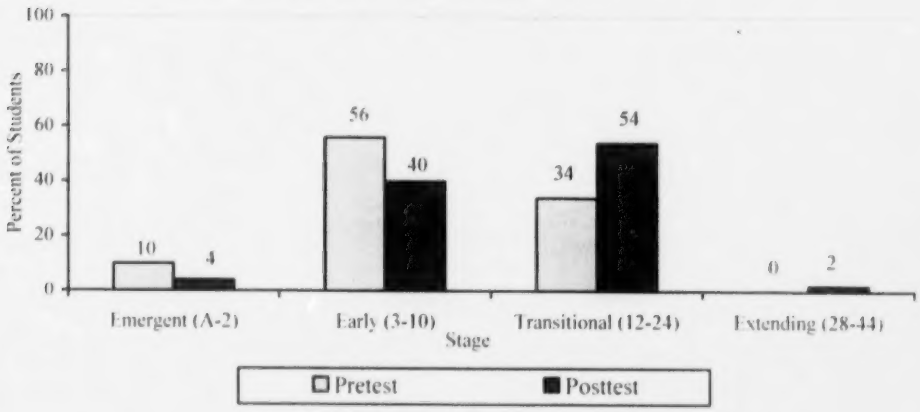
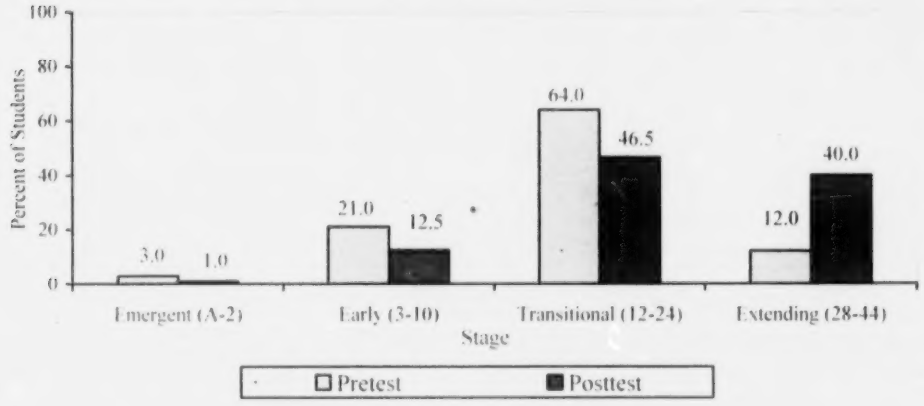


Figure 7: Percentage of Grade 2 S.O.A.R. Students at Each Stage at Pretest and Posttest, 2001



Achievement by Language

Instruction was offered in both English and Spanish during S.O.A.R. 2001. A total of 478 students (22%) received literacy instruction in Spanish and 1,710 students (78%) received instruction in English. Spanish LEP kindergarten students attended summer school at one of the six district LEP summer school sites for pre-K and kindergarten.

Thirty-three S.O.A.R. bilingual teachers taught in 18 grade 1 classes, in 13 grade 2 classes, and in 2 multi-age classrooms of grade 1 and 2 students. Twenty-eight percent of all grade 1 and 2 classes were bilingual.

Spanish DRA, *Evaluacion del Desarrollo de la Lectura*, kits were used for assessment of Spanish LEP students in grades 1 and 2. Of the Spanish language students, 429 (90%) had valid pre- and posttest. Of the English language students, 1,208 (84%) had valid pre- and posttest scores.

The mean gain level for Spanish language students on the Spanish DRA was 2.0 compared to 1.8 for English language students on the DRA. Table 3 shows the minimum, maximum, and mean gains by language on the DRA. Only grades 2 and 3 are included in this comparison because there were no Spanish language students at grade 1.

Table 3: Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Gains for DRA Levels by Language for S.O.A.R. 2001 Students in Grades 2 and 3

Language	Number in Grades 2 & 3	Minimum Gain Level	Maximum Gain Level	Mean Gain Level
English	967	0	13.0	1.8
Spanish	429	0	9.0	2.0

Achievement by Grade

Student grade placement was based on the projected fall 2001 grade level. Table 4 shows the minimum, maximum, and mean gains for DRA levels by grade for S.O.A.R. students with valid pre- and posttest scores. When scores were examined by grade, it could be seen the average gain in text reading level was lowest (1.5) at kindergarten and similar for grades 1 and 2 (2.2 and 2.3, respectively). There was a range of 0 to 13 text reading level gain at S.O.A.R. 2001. Students showing no growth (minimum gain level

of 0) on the DRA included 76 (16%) kindergarten, 124 (15%) grade 1, and 41 (7%) grade 2 students.

Table 4: Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Gains for DRA Text Reading Levels by Grade for S.O.A.R. 2001 Students with Valid DRA Pre- and Posttest Scores

Grade 2000-01	Number Attending	Minimum Gain Level	Maximum Gain Level	Mean Gain Level
Kindergarten	472	0	5.0	1.5
Grade 1	848	0	7.0	2.2
Grade 2	547	0	13.0	2.3
Total	1,867	0	13.0	1.7

Number of Students on Grade Level in Reading

There is an urgency to help students read on grade level because of the current legislation that will require students to pass TAAS reading in grade 3 to be promoted to grade 4 in 2003. The grade levels for comparison will be kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 because these are the grades that the S.O.A.R. students have completed. Although the district has not prescribed a particular DRA level for the end of kindergarten, there is a DRA level that correlates to students being on grade level at the end of kindergarten (level 2), at the end of first grade (level 16), at the end of second grade (level 28), and at the end of third grade (level 38).

According to the DRA, a kindergarten student is considered an emergent reader and should master levels A, 1, and 2. For a student who is on grade level at the end of kindergarten to remain on grade level, he or she would need to gain:

- eight levels (from level 2 to 16) by the end of first grade;
- four levels (from 16 to 28) by the end of second grade; and
- three levels (from 28 to 38) by the end of third grade.

The average gains listed in Table 4 are equivalent to about one fourth to one half of an academic year progress, depending on the grade level of the student.

To determine if S.O.A.R. 2001 provided instruction to students most in need of additional instruction in reading, the grade level equivalent for the DRA text reading levels were examined. The data were analyzed for actual numbers and percentages of students who were below, at, or above grade level (using students with valid pre- and posttest scores).

As shown in Table 5, a total of 417 (22%) kindergarten–grade 2 students were at or above grade level when S.O.A.R. began. It is possible that some of these students were not firmly on grade level and needed additional support. However, there were 150 (8%) students who were above grade level at the pretest, which makes their need to attend the S.O.A.R. program questionable. Other results from this analysis of DRA pretest scores for S.O.A.R. students who had valid pre- and posttest scores include the following:

- 78% of students were below grade level at the pretest;
- 14% of students were at grade level at the pretest; and
- 8% of students were above grade level at the pretest.

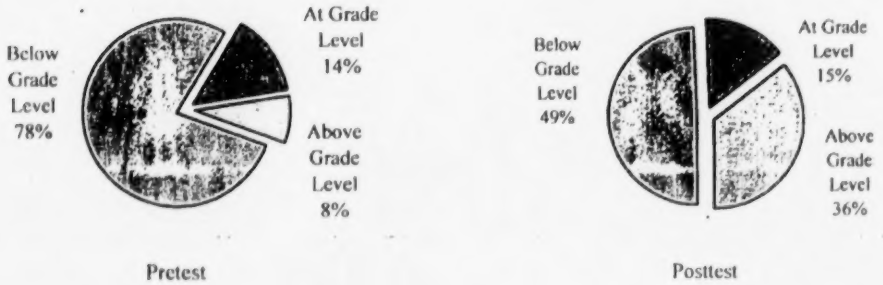
Table 5 shows the distribution of students by grade according to their pre- and posttest scores and groups the students according to their grade level status (below grade level, at grade level, and above grade level) as determined by the DRA.

Table 5: Number of S.O.A.R. 2001 Students at DRA Pretest and Posttest by Grade Level Standing

Grade 2000-01	Below Grade Level		At Grade Level		Above Grade Level	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Kindergarten (n=472)	251	62	151	118	70	292
Grade 1 (n=848)	718	537	77	93	53	218
Grade 2 (n=547)	481	326	39	68	27	153
Total (n=1,867)	*1,450*	*925*	*267*	*279*	*150*	*663*

The information in Table 5 is presented in the following graph, Figure 8, to show growth toward reading progress shown by percentages of students reading below, at, and above grade level at the pretest and posttest.

Figure 8: Percentage of S.O.A.R. 2001 Students Below, At, and Above Grade Level in Reading At DRA Pretest and Posttest



Further analysis was done to assess the impact of S.O.A.R. on those students who began the program below grade level and who may have been most in need of reading intervention. Looking at the below grade level column in Table 5, it can be seen that the number of students with valid pre-and posttest scores who began S.O.A.R. below grade level is 1,450.

The good news about grade level achievement is that 525 students (36%) began S.O.A.R. below grade level and ended the program at or above grade level. The numbers of students by grade who began S.O.A.R. below grade level in reading and ended the program at or above grade level include the following:

- 189 were kindergarten students (75% of kindergarten students who began below grade level);
- 182 were grade 1 students (25% of grade 1 who began below grade level); and
- 154 were grade 2 students (32% of grade 2 who began below grade level).

While 22% of students with valid pre- and posttest scores began the program at or above grade level, 51% of students were at or above grade level at the completion of

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S.O.A.R. This shows a 29 percentage point increase in the number of students who were at or above grade level in reading at the end of the program.

Four-Year Comparison Data

The S.O.A.R. program has evolved and expanded over the past four years. After two years (1998 and 1999) of funding specifically targeting Title I and Optional Extended Year students, the S.O.A.R. reading program was offered free in 2000 and 2001 to all kindergarten through grade 2 students who needed reading intervention. The number of sites, students served, and teachers employed, as well as the program budget have varied greatly from 1998 to 2001. The 2001 S.O.A.R. program was the first year for the enrollment to drop since the beginning of the program. The cost per pupil has decreased each year to $610 in 2001. Table 6 shows four years of information relating to the S.O.A.R. program.

Table 6: S.O.A.R. Program Comparisons by Year

	1998 S.O.A.R.	1999 S.O.A.R.	2000 S.O.A.R.	2001 S.O.A.R.
Number of Sites	3	6	10	12
Number of Students Attending	388	1,249	2,406	2,188
Days Offered	19	20	21	19
Number of Schools Participating	22	52	59	65
Ethnicity				
% Hispanic	47	55	56	58
% African American	37	30	22	20
% Anglo/Other	16	14	21	20
% Asian	<1	1	1	2
Number of Students With Pre- and Posttest scores in English	NA	922	1,661	1,438
Number of Students With Pre- and Posttest scores in Spanish	NA	179	457	429
Average Days in Attendance	16.3	16.6	17.6	15.9
Number of Teachers	45	102	176	159
Number of Mentor Teachers	0	6	12 Campus 2 District	17 Campus 3 District
Number of Bilingual Teachers	7	19	32	33
Average Years Teaching Experience	8.7	7.7	7.6	7.3
Pupil Teacher Ratio	9:1	12:1	14:1	14:1
Cost Per Pupil	$1,257	$721	$713	$610
Budget	$487,620	$901,514	$1,715,411	$1,333,903

Four-Year Achievement Comparisons

While the S.O.A.R. program and the students served have changed, the structure of the classroom instruction has remained basically the same. The balanced literacy components have been a strong framework for this summer reading program. However, there was a decline in the percentage of students making a gain during S.O.A.R. from

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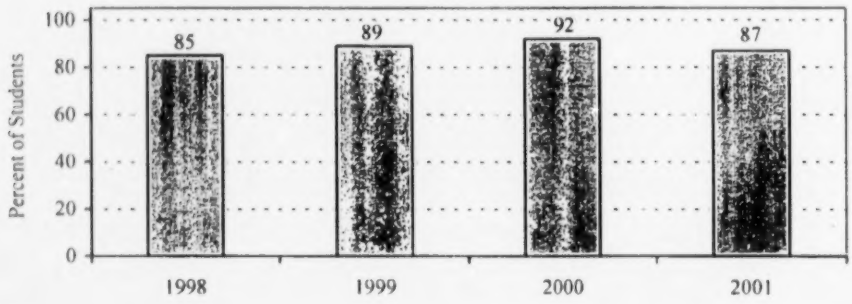
92% in 2000 to 87% in 2001. Figure 9 shows the percentage of students who made a gain in text reading level during the past four years of the S.O.A.R. program.

Figure 9: Percentage of S.O.A.R. 2001 Students Making a Gain in DRA Text Reading Level During S.O.A.R. 1998 through 2001



Further three-year comparisons can be made by examining mean gains in text reading level. Table 7 shows the mean gain in text reading level for all students with valid pre- and posttest scores in 1998 through 2001 and the length of each program. Mean gains in text reading level increased each year from 1998 to 2000 and declined in 2001. Because the 2001 program was 19 days in length as was the 1998 program (1999 was 20 days and 2000 was 21 days), it would be most appropriate to compare 2001 and 1998 results. The average gain in text reading level was 1.9 in 1998 and 1.7 in 2001. Another factor that would likely have influenced achievement gains was a lower average days in attendance (15.9) in 2001 than in any previous year. In 2001, 93% of grade 2 students showed progress as measured on the DRA, compared to 85% of grade 1 students, and 84% of kindergarten students.

Table 7: Mean Gain in DRA Text Reading Levels for S.O.A.R. Students by Number of Program Days, 1998 through 2001

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Mean Gain in Text Reading Levels	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.7
Number of Program Days	19	20	21	19

S.O.A.R. offers ongoing support to students to improve literacy skills and reading. An additional analysis of the longitudinal S.O.A.R. data shows that 781 AISD students have attended the S.O.A.R. summer school more than one year: 725 students attended S.O.A.R. for two summers and 56 students for three summers. A review of test data for the students who attended S.O.A.R. for multiple summers, who had valid pre- and posttest DRA scores, and who were below grade level in the first year of S.O.A.R. shows the following:

- 35% (n=220) of the students who attended S.O.A.R. for two years were reading at or above grade level by the end of the second year of S.O.A.R.; and

- 28% (n=13) of the students who attended S.O.A.R. for three years were reading at or above grade level by the end of the third year of S.O.A.R.

These findings show that even if students do not reach grade level in reading after one summer of intervention, with reading support during the school year and the opportunity to attend additional S.O.A.R. programs, it is possible for students to achieve the goal of reading on grade level by third grade.

LESSONS LEARNED

Teachers, principals, mentor teachers, and program managers who worked with the balanced literacy framework of S.O.A.R. have valuable information to share. Teachers and mentor teachers were asked for in-depth information about how the S.O.A.R. program worked in summer 2001. Interviews were conducted with principals and program managers for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS. In addition, this year parents were asked for their input about the S.O.A.R. program on the parent survey prepared in English and Spanish and sent home with students.

While there was an overall perception that the program benefits students, there were areas of the S.O.A.R. program that were thought to need improvement. This section summarizes the strengths of the S.O.A.R. program and improvements that might make the program even better according to teachers, mentor teachers, principals, program managers, and parents. A detailed narrative about responses from teachers, mentor teachers, and principals about various aspects of S.O.A.R. 2001 can be found in Appendix C.

In general, teachers were more positive about the 2001 S.O.A.R. teaching experience than were teachers from last year's S.O.A.R. program. In 2000, teachers were most concerned about the perceived negativity of district coordinators. In 2001, S.O.A.R. teachers were most concerned about the lack of supplies and materials available at their campuses the first week of school. As one returning S.O.A.R. teacher said, "Central administration was much more supportive this year." See Appendix D for a complete list of mean responses to the teacher survey by campus and across the twelve campuses.

STRENGTHS OF THE 2001 PROGRAM

> "I think this program is excellent. It has completely enlightened me as far as diagnosing reading problems, analyzing student mistakes, and developing a plan to address deficiencies specifically."
>
> -New S.O.A.R. Teacher-

The overall S.O.A.R. program for children was praised by many teachers. Some of the teachers' comments are listed below. Some areas, which received the highest praise, were the following:

- *Leadership* – The mentor teachers and the principal were positive, knowledgeable, and supportive.

- *Class Size* – Most teachers believe that a small class size of 10-12 students is ideal to provide the intensive intervention that these below grade level readers need to show progress in reading during the four-week program.
- *Structure and Schedule for S.O.A.R.* – The daily schedule of components that matched the balanced literacy model and the structure of the set schedule was good for students and teachers. Balanced literacy components include phonemic awareness activities, word wall activities, shared reading, shared writing, word work, centers, guided reading, and read aloud.
- *Materials* – The quality of the materials was highly praised by teachers.
- *Teacher Camaraderie and Teamwork* - Many of the teachers praised the camaraderie of the faculty at their S.O.A.R. campus. A good interaction among teachers, mentors, and the principal helped make this a positive experience.
- *Experienced Teachers and Staff* - The participation of many teachers who were already experienced in the S.O.A.R. model were helpful to teachers new to summer school.
- *Knowledge Gained* - Many teachers indicated that they would take the knowledge gained from teaching S.O.A.R. back to their home campus this fall.

Mentor Teachers

Mentor teachers noted S.O.A.R. program strengths in terms of student learning and teacher knowledge.

- *Student Achievement* - Students made both academic (reading and writing) and personal (self-esteem) gains. The program benefited struggling readers by building from phonics to word recognition to reading fluency to reading comprehension.
- *Balanced Literacy Model* - The balanced literacy approach of the S.O.A.R. model exposed students and teachers to intense, structured, and meaningful reading and writing activities.
- *S.O.A.R. Schedule* - The focus of the S.O.A.R. program schedule allowed for a concentrated impact on student reading improvement.
- *S.O.A.R. Materials* - Materials for the program were of excellent quality, both multi-level and motivating for children.
- *Knowledge Gained* - Teachers gained program experiences (through professional development, teamwork, classroom time, etc.) that will enhance their teaching during the regular school year. Some teachers learned new techniques (e.g., guided reading, centers, running records, etc.) through S.O.A.R. that provided them with new ways to approach excellence in student instruction.

Principals

Principals were asked to summarize the strengths of S.O.A.R. The most common strengths cited in S.O.A.R. addressed the following areas:

- *Lessons* - well-planned and structured lessons;

- *Materials* - good quality and quantity;
- *Schedule* - concentrated, well-structured, and well-timed program (four hours per day for four weeks);
- *Expectations* - clear expectations for students and teachers;
- *Student achievement* - students engaged and achieving; students gaining experiences they otherwise might not have; improvements in learning and reading strategies;
- *Staff* (i.e., mentors, teaching assistants, special education teacher, bilingual support, secretary, etc.)- superb, dedicated, and talented teachers;
- *Professional development* – good training for teachers and principals; strategies could be taken back to the home campus/classroom; teachers gained balanced literacy approach; teachers learned from each other; and
- *Class size* – small classes enabled teachers to provide focused attention where students needed help the most.

Suggestions for Improving the 2002 Districtwide Summer Reading Programs

Most teachers and principals agreed that the structure of the S.O.A.R. program that offers reading intervention to students who are reading below grade level is sound, but some of the policies and procedures need to be fine-tuned.

The structure of the S.O.A.R. program is strong, but there are some areas of the implementation of the program that are in need of attention. S.O.A.R. 2001 teachers made the following suggestions for future programs:

- *Communication and Coordination* - Communicate better to coordinate the summer programs to enable effective teaching and learning;
- *Expectations* - Provide clear expectations for teachers, principals, and mentor teachers for their roles in the summer teaching and learning experience;
- *Training* - Restructure training to meet the needs of teachers at all levels of experience with balanced literacy model, and make the training more rigorous;
- *Class Size* - Try to keep class size at 10-12 students;
- *Materials* - Continue to purchase more low-level books, bilingual books and materials, and English and Spanish take-home books; and
- *Registration* - Improve the registration form to include information about special needs, LEP status, and language of instruction to improve staffing of teachers and grouping of children.

Mentor Teachers

Mentor teachers suggested the following improvements to the program for next year:

- *Program Length* - The program should be longer than four weeks.

- *Coordination and Communication* - Program managers for both S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS should work more closely together to improve consistency and collaboration in the programs, especially in the areas of communication and policy. Some mentors wanted more clearly communicated expectations on attendance and discipline.
- *Registration* - The registration process should be improved by requiring more specific and complete information on the registration forms, including the addition of the student's grade level during a specific school year, whether students are limited English proficient, and an indicator of their language of instruction.
- *Materials* - Materials need to be available and delivered to the campuses on time prior to the beginning of the programs. More bilingual materials are needed because many students were limited English proficient. In addition, a wider range of materials appropriate to different students' reading abilities is needed.
- *Staffing* - An additional aide is needed at each campus to relieve work load on principals and mentors at the beginning of the program. The teacher interview and selection process should be revised.
- *Training* - Training needs to be more thorough and detailed. A full day of pay should be provided to mentors and principals for the day prior to the beginning of the program when they are preparing and setting up.

Principals

All principals interviewed supported continuing the summer S.O.A.R. program. Each principal offered suggestions for improvements in next year's program. Highlights of the suggestions are presented here.

- *Program Consistency* - S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS should be consistent according to principals. This applies to policies, procedures, student eligibility, registration, training, staffing, support, and reporting. Several principals recommended a written policy manual. Better communication between programs (all staff, coordinators, math and language teams, etc.) and to parents also was recommended. Several principals expressed an opinion that programs should be held separately. For example, at least two principals indicated that S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS should be on separate campuses, while another indicated that bilingual students should be served separately (for uniformity of materials and staff). For consistency of reporting and accountability, a suggestion was made to try and make the data forms (e.g., progress report, final report, accountability forms) uniform.
- *Application/Eligibility* - Several suggestions were made to make the program application form more clear, and to require that recommending teachers fill out forms more completely (i.e., include special student needs, language of instruction). One principal suggested that any existing data on students be pulled from district databases prior to the registration and start of the program. In addition, according to some principals, better clarity and communication about program eligibility are needed. For instance, students should not be sent

to summer school for discipline problems since these programs are aimed at improving academic achievement (reading, and math in the case of SUCCESS).

- *Registration* - Principals recommended several things to improve registration. Because some of the problems noted with registration included inaccurate enrollment estimates, errors in numbers of staff hired, and a lack of enough information on student needs (e.g., bilingual, special education), the recommendations focused on having a registration deadline, a late registration day prior to summer school beginning, more complete information provided on registration forms, and in some cases separate registration forms for those children with special needs. One person suggested that a single person be in charge of registration on each campus.
- *Planning* - Most principals said that the program would benefit from more time allowed for planning and preparation.
- *Coordination* - Several principals indicated that there should be one program coordinator for all summer programs. This person would begin planning the summer program a year in advance. This person could also ensure coordination between programs. If there are to be two different program coordinators (i.e., S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS), then they must communicate to ensure consistency of forms, policies, and other important aspects of the programs.
- *Availability of Materials* - Concern expressed about the timeliness of program materials caused several principals to suggest that the materials be ready and available early. This includes all English or Spanish versions of materials. One person suggested that the ordering of summer materials should be done right after the beginning of the calendar year so that they will arrive by spring. In addition, in order to adapt materials for students with special education needs, assistance should be provided to summer program staff by the Special Education office in the interpretation of students' (IEP) individualized education plan. Another suggestion made was to order more lower level materials in order to address students with special learning needs or who are not on grade level.
- *Transportation* - Better communication and coordination with AISD transportation was recommended with regard to school feeder patterns and bus routing.
- *Staffing* - In order to be prepared for summer programs, appropriate staffing needs to occur at every school, in terms of bilingual and special education services, and in terms of grade level. This was a recommendation made for both S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS. Several principals thought that it would be helpful to have counselors at each campus as well. One principal suggested hiring more teaching assistants per campus. Two principals said that a nurse is needed at every campus daily because many students are taking medications. Experienced teachers should be hired as mentors. Consistent and constant communication should be occurring between all staffs. Availability of and support from central office program staff were seen as

critical to the success of the program. One principal indicated that principals and mentors needed to be provided more paid time to compensate them for all the extra time put into planning and monitoring the program.

- *Curriculum* - Although most principals were pleased with the curriculum and model, many thought reexamining the way things were done and getting input from teachers and mentor teachers would be helpful in finding new techniques and new examples, and in adding best practice stan'ards for teaching the subject matter.

Parental Involvement

Ninety-six percent of parents who responded to the parent survey (n=981) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The S.O.A.R. program was good for my child."

Every SOAR campus principal reported having a parent night or back-to-school night at the beginning of the program, and most indicated that there was a student awards and recognition event (parents invited) at the end of the program. Although some principals said that attendance at some of the events was not as high as expected, most principals were pleased with parent involvement during the summer program. Several principals mentioned additional activities that encouraged parents to be involved with their students during the program. For instance, teachers made phone calls to introduce themselves to parents, invite parents to school events, or discuss relevant student program issues with parents (e.g., student academic performance, discipline, attendance, etc.). Many campuses sent home informational flyers and student progress reports during the program. Other activities mentioned included parent-teacher conferences, classroom visits, parent-child breakfast, and daily take-home parent-student activities. Suggestions to improve parent involvement in the future focused mainly on increasing and improving the amount of parent-school communication. For instance, one school principal indicated that more phone calls would be made in the future, while another indicated that more Spanish translations of parent information should be made available. Two principals suggested that more clear rules and expectations should be provided to parents about the summer program with regards to attendance and bus transportation. One principal suggested that improvements in promoting the program could be made with the help of the local media.

Parent Surveys

In 2001, parents were asked for their input about the S.O.A.R. program. Surveys in English and Spanish were sent home with students the third week of S.O.A.R. A total of 981 (689 English language and 292 Spanish language) parents responded. This represents 45% of all students or 53% of the students who completed the program. There could have been duplicates from parents who had more than one child enrolled in S.O.A.R.

The overall response to the S.O.A.R. program by parents was positive. To the statement, "The S.O.A.R. program was good for my child," parents responded with an overall response of 4.6 on a 5.0 scale with 5.0 being strongly agree. This represents 96% of all parents who responded to the survey agreeing that the S.O.A.R. program was good for their child.

The lowest overall agreement was 3.9 on the following two statements: "My child's bus was on time," and "If my child's S.O.A.R. campus did not have childcare, my child would not have been able to attend." Spanish speaking parents gave the timeliness of the bus a lower overall rating (3.8) than English speaking parents (4.1). On the other hand, English speaking parents gave the need for childcare a lower rating (3.4) than Spanish speaking parents (4.5) which might indicate that the Spanish speaking families do not have as much access to childcare as the English speaking parents. For all the ratings from the parent survey, see Appendix E.

Some of the responses made by parents when asked, "What was best about the S.O.A.R. program for your child?" include the following:

- *Student Achievement* – Parents reported that their children showed improved reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition, many parents said that students showed improved phonics, spelling, word/letter pronunciation, and word/letter recognition skills.
- *Student Self-confidence* – Many parents were pleased with the increased self-confidence they noticed in their children. With more self-confidence came increased enjoyment of school, reading, and learning, some parents said. Socializing with new classmates and teachers was also a confidence builder for the students, according to parents.
- *Staff* – Parents appreciated the motivated teachers and staff who cared about students' learning.
- *S.O.A.R. Schedule* – The program focused on reading activities. Students were able to practice and/or maintain skills needed during the school year.

Parent comments about the strengths of the program include the following:

- "I see an increase in my daughter's confidence. She has improved in her reading ability. I believe the smaller class size and more one on one attention has helped the most."
- "The practice during the off-months has helped my daughter maintain and improve her level."
- "The program gave my daughter a chance to further develop her reading skills and prepare her for the reading curriculum in first grade."
- "The focus was on reading which my child needed. I would recommend this program for all children."
- "The teacher was effective and energetic."

Parents were also asked, "How could the S.O.A.R. program be better next year?" While some parents said, "Don't change anything," the following suggestions were made for improvement.

- *Program Length* – Many parents asked the program be longer to extend instructional time (e.g., longer hours, more days, more weeks).

- *Student Needs* – Several parents said the program provide more services for special needs students (e.g., special education, dyslexia). Other parents suggested that teachers be provided more information about students from their home campus in order to better meet student needs during program.
- *Homework* – Some parents asked that the program require more homework. Other parents asked that books be sent home for reading with the children.
- *Parent Information* – Parents were interested in receiving more teacher-parent communication prior to and during program. Some parents asked for more information on program structure, curriculum, what activities are occurring in classroom, expectations of parents/students, and opportunities for parent involvement. Also requested was more information on student progress and ways parents can help their student learn/improve.
- *Instruction* – Some parents asked that the program hire more teachers in allow for more one-on-one instruction.
- *Registration* – Many parents commented about the registration process. They suggested better organization during first day/week of program and an improved registration. Parents added that it would be helpful to have class assignments completed before program starts.
- *Additions to the Program* – Some parents asked that the S.O.A.R. program be offered at home campuses (closer to students' homes). Several parents asked that math instruction be added to the program.
- *Child Care* – Many parents asked that after-school care be offered at all program campuses. Parents also said that they would like to have program information earlier in order to arrange childcare.
- *Transportation* – Parents whose children rode the bus, asked for increased bus safety and improve bus service (on time, etc.).

Comments From Project Managers

The program managers all realized that there were problems with communication, logistics, and policy and procedures in summer 2001, and they plan to make improvements in 2002.

Program managers for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS were interviewed to get input about the successes and challenges for these two summer programs. The program managers include:

- Maria Hohenstein – Program Director/Language Arts (S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS)
- Kathryn Stone – Personnel/Strategy Director in Language Arts (S.O.A.R.)
- Peggy Mays – Grant Manager for Accelerated Reading Grant (S.O.A.R.)
- Paula Gustafson – Program Director/Mathematics (SUCCESS)
- Mary Thomas – Compliance Officer for Optional Extended Year (OEY) Grant (SUCCESS)

The academic areas addressed in the two summer elementary programs were different. The kindergarten through grade 2 S.O.A.R. program offered reading instruction only while the grade 3-5 SUCCESS program provided reading and mathematics instruction.

The SUCCESS program was new in 2001 and the majority of the funding came from the state Optional Extended Year grant and local dropout funds. The mathematics team made decisions about the mathematics curriculum for SUCCESS and the language and literacy team made decisions about the language arts curricula for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS. Department secretaries made purchases for their department. It seems that minimal communication went on. As the math coordinator said, "Math and language arts staff initially worked well together. But problems ensued." She added that there were multiple people dealing with transportation, which made the system disjointed. Decisions were made without communicating with the other program managers. Most of the program managers agreed that the summer elementary programs would work better if there was one person to oversee S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS.

Peggy Mays indicated that the funding was not adequate for the two programs. She said that the district was operating both programs on about the same amount of money used to operate S.O.A.R. in 2000. She said that materials for SUCCESS were minimal and that both programs need more materials. In addition, more money is needed for teacher assistants to help with large classes.

Different funding sources with different program requirements made the integration of the two programs difficult. OEY rules allowed no more than 16:1 in a classroom while the S.O.A.R. ratio was 18:1. Attendance requirements for OEY were interpreted incorrectly by some SUCCESS staff, and some students were dismissed from SUCCESS while S.O.A.R. did not dismiss students for low attendance. Inconsistencies of policy and procedure were glaring, and teachers and principals commented about its negative affect. Program directors for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS purchased different kinds of incentives (principals and teachers thought the math incentives nicer) making it difficult for principals to feel that they were treating all students at their campus equally. In addition, most of the program directors were out of town at a meeting the first week of summer school, which made communication even more difficult.

The major complaint for S.O.A.R. this year was that basic supplies such as pencils and paper were not available the first week of school. Materials continued to come in each week of the program with mentor teachers taking time to level and distribute books. The S.O.A.R. program managers indicated that there was miscommunication between the curriculum department and the finance department about getting the materials ordered in time for summer school. Materials did not arrive on time. A process to follow-through with the orders was not in place.

There were many logistical problems. At on-site registration more students showed up than were expected. There were no set procedures for on-site registration and no information (referral to S.OA.R.) available for those students. Some parents waited for hours to get their children enrolled.

Some teacher application forms were lost after being mailed to Human Resources. Some experienced teachers who applied did not get hired because of this. Adequate staffing was difficult because program staff were not sure of the needs of students

enrolled in the program. Several students with severe physical needs and more Spanish LEP students than expected complicated the staffing.

The program managers all realized that these problems with communication, logistics, and policy and procedures existed and plan to make improvements in 2002. The committee is already talking about next year as this report is being completed. They are very open to criticism and respond by trying to make the processes better. The following is a summary of the comments from program managers about program successes and lessons learned for next year.

Program Successes

All program staff agreed that both students and teachers benefited from the summer programs, S.O.A.R./SUCCESS. Some of the successes include the following:

- *Student Achievement* - Students benefited from the concentrated, intense summer program schedule/curriculum, and academic progress was made for many students at risk of failing. Program managers felt students learned strategies and became more confident readers.
- *S.O.A.R. Schedule* - The summer program was seen as motivating and engaging to students because of its focus, complementing the regular school year program.
- *Curriculum* - The curriculum was aligned with student needs. The structured curriculum and framework for daily lessons were also beneficial to the teachers.
- *Professional Development* - All program staff indicated that teachers benefited from the summer program because they were given professional development, and they learned new teaching strategies and techniques that they could take with them to their regular school year settings. Teachers learned teaching strategies that are beneficial to at-risk learners.
- *Support Staff* - The availability of mentors to teachers was seen as an invaluable resource for teachers.

Suggestions for Next Year

Program managers gave the following suggestions for improving the elementary summer programs:

- *Student Needs* - Serving bilingual and special education students during the summer programs was an area where the program managers agreed on the need for improvement. Program managers agreed that more complete data on students must be made available sooner from the referring home school teachers (e.g., special education and/or LEP status, complete testing scores on DRA, TAAS, etc.).
- *Registration* - Overall, all managers agreed that the registration form and process needed to be improved, with more detail required on the form and a registration period being completed well before the summer program begins. As one program manager said, "Effective service means better referral and registration processes as well as improvements in staffing and materials for next year's program."

- *Communication* - Earlier and complete communication with district staff in special education and bilingual education needs to occur to ensure the staff has a complete understanding of the summer program's purpose, requirements, and student eligibility.
- *Staffing* - Adequate numbers of staff (bilingual and special education) also need to be hired for the summer program. Due to the growth in the number of students served during summer, a full-time staff group should be assigned to year-round planning, coordination, and implementation of summer programs.
- *Materials* - An adequate amount of bilingual and lower-level materials must be available for the summer program.
- *Assessment* - Assessment was another area of concern among program managers, with some managers indicating that more complete assessment data needs to be available prior to the beginning of the summer program. The spring assessment information (e.g., DRA) should be used as the "pre" test data on students rather than spend summer school instructional time doing assessment.
- *Supervision/Coordination* – Most program managers agreed that one person should oversee the entire elementary summer school program. In addition, there should be a single contact person in the district's Finance office in order to streamline and speed up financial processing of paperwork for ordering materials, securing vendor services, etc.

Because several district departments and offices are involved in making the summer program happen, improved coordination and communication was seen as critical to future program success. This extended to a recommendation for future program training to include more complete in review of procedures, curricula and expectations, and to be made mandatory for all district staff involved – principals, teachers, district support staff, etc.

Summary and Recommendations

The S.O.A.R. program has grown and evolved during its four years of existence. The program has proven successful for a large majority of the 6,000 students who have attended during its four years of operation. Students have consistently shown progress in reading during the program. An additional benefit is that S.O.A.R. teachers receive professional development and hands-on learning in balanced literacy that they can use in their classrooms throughout the year.

The 2001 S.O.A.R. program served 2,188 students who had completed kindergarten through grade 2 and were in need of reading intervention. The average gain for all students who attended the program was 1.7 text reading levels as determined by the DRA. During the 19-day program, 87% of students with valid pre- and posttest scores showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA.

While the 2001 DRA data showed student progress in reading, the average gain in text reading levels and the overall percentage of students advancing one or more levels was less than previous years. This could be due to many factors (e.g., length of program, attendance, teacher training, materials available, administration of running records, or

needs of students attending). Further analysis will be required to assess the impact of these factors on student achievement.

There was a new program, SUCCESS, added to the responsibilities of the program managers, principals, and mentor teachers. In addition, there was an almost completely new administrative staff in charge of both programs.

Teachers, mentor teachers, principals, parents, and project managers have given feedback about the many strengths of the S.O.A.R. program. The following recommendations about improvements that could make the program even better as S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS continue in summer 2002 are offered based on comments that were consistent across program facilitators. (Note: At the current time, staffs from both programs are planning together and have begun work on many of the operational and procedural recommendations for the 2002 program.)

1. *Monitor the S.O.A.R. program in 2002 for achievement gains in reading.* While the 2001 DRA data showed student progress in reading, the average gain in text reading levels and the overall percentage of students advancing one or more levels was less than in previous years. Therefore, it is recommended that the DRA results for the 2002 S.O.A.R. program be evaluated to closely monitor achievement for students in kindergarten through grade 2. In addition, evaluation staff should follow up on prior S.O.A.R participants and matched student groups using academic measures such as TAAS reading to determine if there are long-term benefits from participation in S.O.A.R.
2. *Coordinate the S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS programs more effectively to enhance teaching and learning.* According to principals and teachers, program managers of summer elementary programs need to communicate better about policies and procedures when planning for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS in 2002. Because one principal oversees both programs at a campus, there needs to be consistent policies and procedures for both programs. Principals expressed a need to treat all students and teachers at their summer school site equally. During 2001, there were some problems such as inconsistencies in attendance, discipline, incentives, class size, and support personnel that contributed to unequal circumstances for students and staff at campuses. Teachers and principals suggested that there should be one contact person for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS (also recommended in 2000) to ensure consistency.
3. *Coordinate effectively with other central office departments in order to ensure that necessary teachers and materials are available for summer programs.* The major complaint by teachers and principals in 2001 was that materials and supplies were not available at the beginning of S.O.A.R. This was the result of miscommunication and/or a lack of communication between curriculum staff and finance department staff. All operational procedures have to be in place for ordering and receiving of materials, hiring teachers, and transporting students.
4. *Develop a policies and procedures manual for S.O.A.R. teachers and principals available prior to the beginning of the summer program to allow for consistency across the program.* As in 2000, teachers and principals

requested a manual that would include specific information about classroom procedures, employment issues, eligibility requirements, attendance and behavior policies, and registration deadlines.

5. *Restructure professional development and add more rigorous and in-depth training in order to challenge experienced S.O.A.R. teachers.* As in 2000, teachers, mentor teachers, and principals offered many suggestions for changing the training model, but said that the training should be consistent for all grade levels. With 42% of this year's S.O.A.R. teachers having previous S.O.A.R. teaching experience, it is important to challenge these teachers with more in-depth and rigorous training.
6. *Revise the application forms to include information about special needs and language of instruction to better inform program managers about student needs.* Valuable teacher time was required this year to determine special needs and LEP status of students. There were cases this year where students were referred inappropriately to S.O.A.R. (i.e., severe physical or emotional needs). Proper identification of eligible students and reporting of student needs by home campuses is necessary for planning and preparation for S.O.A.R. Better communication with directors of the bilingual and special education programs is needed to ensure that students who are referred to S.O.A.R. will benefit from the fast-paced program. Instruction will go more smoothly if teachers and principals are aware of special needs situations in advance.
7. *Revise the registration process to eliminate disruptions and delays on the first day of summer school.* The on-site registration that occurred the first day of S.O.A.R. needs to be revised. Questions will need to be answered about the use of the new district data system (SASI) for summer 2002 programs. Because some of the problems associated with registration included inaccurate enrollment estimates, errors in numbers of staff hired, and a lack of enough information on student needs (e.g., bilingual, special education), principal recommendations focused on having a registration deadline, a late registration day prior to summer school beginning, more complete information provided on registration forms, and in some cases separate registration forms for those children with special needs. In addition, the district must ensure that students are identified for S.O.A.R. and parents are notified in a timely manner to allow easy access for all eligible students.

The data indicate that the structure of the S.O.A.R. program can withstand change and growth and still be an effective reading intervention. The program should focus on providing reading intervention to those early elementary students who are below grade level in reading. Training, supervision, and materials need to be of utmost quality to accomplish this goal.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Number of Students Who Attended S.O.A.R. 2001, by School and by Area

School	# Students Who Attended S.O.A.R. 2001
Allan*	0
Allison	18
Andrews	28
Baranoff	16
Barrington	42
Barton Hills	7
Becker*	0
Blackshear	32
Blanton	35
Boone	51
Brentwood	50
Brooke	30
Brown	33
Bryker Woods	5
Campbell	35
Casey	40
Casis	13
Cook	46
Cowan	29
Cunningham	17
Davis	20
Dawson	29
Doss	19
Galindo	35
Govalle	41
Graham	52
Gullett	5
Harris	65
Hart	33
Highland Park	0
Hill	20
Houston	53
Jordan	62
Joslin	38
Kiker	17
Kocurek	44
Langford	59
Lee	28
Linder	56
Maplewood*	0
Mathews	13
McBee	45
Menchaca	32
Metz*	0
Mills	20
Norman	32
Oak Hill	37
Oak Springs	17
Odom	60
Ortega*	0
Palm	46
Patton	20
Pease	12
Pecan Springs	35
Pillow	31
Pleasant Hill	37
Reilly	18
Ridgetop	14
Rodriguez	39
Sanchez*	0
Sims	36
St. Elmo*	0
Summitt	17
Sunset Valley	37
Travis Heights	39
Walnut Creek	106
Widen*	0
Willliams	49
Winn	63
Wooldridge	39
Wooten	43
Zavala	28
Zilker	11
Private Schools	9
Total	2,188

* 2000-01 Year-Round Schools

Number of Students By Area/Vertical Team:

Area 1 385 (1 Year-round campus)
Area 2 371 (4 Year-round campuses)
Area 3 354 (2 Year-round campuses)
Area 4 552 (1 Year-round campus)
Area 5 517 (0 Year-round campus)

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APPENDIX B: READING LEVELS

The following chart roughly illustrates how these levels relate to each other and to school grade levels.

Grade Level (Basal Level)	Guided Reading Level (Fountas-Pinnell)	DRA Level ** (Joetta Beaver)	Reading Recovery Level
K (Readiness)	-	A	-
	A	1	1
K (Readiness)	B	2	2
Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)	C	3	3 & 4
Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)	D	4	5 & 6
Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)	E	6-8	7 & 8
Grade 1 (Primer)	F	10	9 & 10
Grade 1 (Primer)	G	12	11 & 12
Grade 1	H	14	13 & 14
Grade 1 (Late	I	16	15 & 16 (17)*
Grade 2 (Early)	J	18 - 20	*(17), 18, 19, 20
Grade 2	K		
Grade 2	L		
Grade 2	M	24-28	
Grade 3	N	30	-
Grade 3	O	34-38	-
Grade 3	P		-
Grade 4 (Early)	Q	40	-
Grade 4	-		-
Grade 4 (Late)	R		-
Grade 5	-	44	-
Grade 5	-		-

Source: AISD Department of Curriculum

* Level 17 is transitional. Placement of Reading Recovery levels 17-20 varies among school districts. (A few school districts place Reading Recovery levels 15 & 16 at grade 2.)

** *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA), developed by Joetta Beaver in collaboration with primary classroom teachers, also provides a leveling system appropriate for classroom use. DRA benchmark titles were field-tested by 78 primary classrooms from urban, suburban, rural, and small town school districts throughout the United States and Canada to assess the accuracy of the levels. The DRA system uses a numeric code and offers a broad range of texts appropriate for guided and independent reading.

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APPENDIX C: TEACHER, MENTOR TEACHER, AND PRINCIPAL COMMENTS

Responses by S.O.A.R. campus staff (teachers, mentor teachers, and principals) are organized by topic.

S.O.A.R. LEADERSHIP

> "The mentor teacher and principal at my site were extremely helpful. They were positive and did everything they could to help ensure the effective performance of the teachers to meet the students' needs."
> -S.O.A.R. 2001 Teacher-

The campus leadership provided by the principal and the mentor teacher received high praise from the S.O.A.R. teachers. The teachers stated that the mentor teachers were highly skilled, positive, available, supportive, organized, experienced, and encouraging. Mentor teachers helped the teachers by delivering and sorting materials and supplies, modeling guided reading, giving feedback and in-class support, giving ideas for activities for centers, and helping with the assessment. As one teacher wrote, "We could not have done it without them."

Teachers also greatly appreciated the S.O.A.R. principals. A few of the adjectives teachers wrote to describe their principals were supportive, motivated, encouraging, organized, positive, eager to help, knowledgeable, and exceptional. Some principals were praised for their trust in the teachers to make decisions that were in the children's best interest. In addition, teachers said the program was well run with good planning and organization. According to many teachers, principals gave high and clear expectations to staff.

Each S.O.A.R campus had at least one mentor teacher to assist classroom teachers with balanced literacy instruction. The larger sites, Graham, McBee, Palm, Pleasant Hill, and Winn, had two mentor teachers making a total of 17 mentor teachers. In addition, three district mentor teachers visited the 12 campuses observing and giving feedback to mentor teachers and classroom teachers. Eight (47%) of the mentors had previously been S.O.A.R. teachers or mentor teachers.

The 14 (82%) S.O.A.R. mentor teachers that responded to the questionnaire listed a variety of activities that they were responsible for during the summer program including the following.

- conducted staff development;
- assisted with student registration at the beginning of the program;
- organized and distributed curriculum materials to teachers;
- set up literacy libraries;
- conducted classroom observations and walkthroughs, and provided feedback to teachers;
- helped teachers administer the DRA to students;
- assisted individual students who needed help;
- modeled or demonstrated lessons for teachers;

- provided effective instructional strategies to use with low-level readers;
- provided feedback and assistance to principals;
- served as liaison between administrators and teachers;
- conducted debriefing sessions with teachers on how to improve their teaching methods;
- provided instructional support and coaching for teachers; and
- helped with other activities as assigned.

Almost without exception, principals valued the presence of the mentor teachers on campus during the summer program. Whether they were providing support in management of materials inventory or providing feedback to teachers in the classroom, principals felt the mentor teachers were essential to the success of the program. Only on a few occasions did some principals report there were problems. For instance, one principal reported that classroom walkthrough observations by mentors were inconsistent between the S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS programs. Another principal reported poor communication between the language arts and math (SUCCESS) mentor teachers. Several principals stated that they could have used more support in terms of special education and counseling. Principals varied in their observations of the availability of mentors when they needed them, but most agreed that mentors were critical to the program.

The mentor teachers provided suggestions for improvements in the mentor teacher role for next year's program. These suggestions included:

- allow more time to organize materials and set up classrooms;
- have materials delivered to summer school campuses rather than be picked up by the mentor teachers at central office;
- provide two mentor teachers per campus to serve both programs, and to ensure having bilingual support for both S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS;
- allow more time with teachers and trainers before school starts;
- improve the student registration forms by adding bilingual instruction or transition instruction categories;
- require S.O.A.R. teachers to meet with three to four small student groups daily; and
- use more accountability with teachers by asking for records to be submitted that ensure students are grouped by level, new books are being introduced daily, and running records are being completed.

According to one teacher, "The administration and support staff on our campus made summer school successful this year."

Training and Preparation

As was suggested in 2000, experienced teachers said that there should be separate training for new S.O.A.R. teachers and experienced teachers. More in-depth training on center ideas and guided reading for experienced S.O.A.R. teachers is needed because this year 42% of the teachers had taught S.O.A.R. in previous summers.

The 2001 S.O.A.R. training was conducted according to grade level much like the 2000 training was organized. Grade 1 teachers met at Pleasant Hill, grade 2 teachers at Graham, grade 3 teachers at McBee, and bilingual teachers at Sims. The mentor teachers presented training in 1-½ days, May 30 - 31, 2001.

The 17 mentor teachers worked in teams to deliver the training at the four sites. Some teachers praised the training for good ideas. One teacher said that the materials in the training notebook "contain excellent ideas for all areas of literacy." However, many teachers, mostly experienced S.O.A.R. teachers, believe that the training for S.O.A.R. teachers needs to improve.

As was suggested in 2000, experienced teachers said that there should be separate training for new S.O.A.R. teachers and experienced teachers. More in-depth training on center ideas and guided reading for experienced S.O.A.R. teachers is needed because this year 42% of the teachers had taught S.O.A.R. in previous summers. One teacher suggested having Reading Recovery teachers lead the training. Many teachers said that the training could happen in one day, and teachers would have more time for planning and setting up their classrooms. Other suggestions included: having one mentor teacher do the training and the others on the team could be at campuses sorting materials and supplies, and leveling books; or have the training at each S.O.A.R. site with the assigned mentor teacher(s) leading the training using the materials available at that campus. Teachers indicated that they were given different information at different training sites.

Mentor teachers also were asked to comment on the structure of teacher training. Many responded that the structure and materials worked. However, responses were mixed when the mentor teachers considered whether there were benefits from having teachers grouped by grade level; some said this structure worked, while others said that training would have been better if all teachers were present for the same training at the same time. The reasons given for a unified training stressed the need for consistency of information given to teachers. One mentor teacher suggested providing training stations (e.g., guided reading, shared reading, phonemic awareness, word wall, etc.) in which teachers could rotate during the training period. One mentor teacher stated that training should cover all aspects of the program that would possibly occur during the four weeks. Other mentor teachers suggested that teacher training should be grouped differently, not by grade levels. For instance, teachers could be trained by program (i.e., all S.O.A.R. teachers in one session, all SUCCESS teachers in another) or by bilingual and English teachers. One mentor teacher suggested having only one full day of training of all teachers together, followed by a half-day of campus staff development, and then another day and a half of time for teachers to set up and prepare for school to start.

Other mentor teachers suggested allocating more time during training for teachers to collaborate, share best practices in instruction, and have the opportunity to experience more lesson plan demonstrations. This suggestion corroborates other mentor teachers' comments about focusing on specific techniques during training such as how to conduct guided reading, provide more examples of phonemic awareness, and give instructions on keeping proper running records.

Principals were asked to give their opinion on whether teachers were adequately trained in the S.O.A.R. balanced literacy model and in the DRA test. As a follow up question, principals were asked if they felt teachers were implementing the S.O.A.R.

model effectively in the classroom. All principals stated that based on classroom observations the model was implemented well in the classroom and that their teachers were effective. Students were actively engaged in learning, classroom resources were useful, and having experienced teachers in the classroom was very beneficial. The only problem noted by principals was the lack or lateness of bilingual materials at the start of the program due to underestimates of bilingual children. This required extra work for those teachers. Otherwise, few teachers were observed having problems with the S.O.A.R. model or the DRA.

In addition to the assistance from the mentor teacher, each campus was given a copy of two current resource materials for teachers. *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children*, by Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, and Beeler, and *Easy Lessons for Teaching Word Families*, by Judy Lynch, are both designed specifically for improving literacy skills in kindergarten through grade 2 students.

When asked whether the planning time prior to S.O.A.R. was adequate for principals and teachers, most principals responses indicated that it would have been better if at least one more day of preparation had been available for both principals and teachers. In many cases, principals indicated that staff with prior S.O.A.R. experience had an easier time preparing than did staff new to the program. Those principals who suggested adding more planning and preparation time indicated that teachers needed more setup time in their classrooms, and principals needed more time to meet with staff. Other suggestions for improving planning and preparation included the following:

- More thorough and organized staff development for all S.O.A.R. staff, including the addition of a program policy manual (for both S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS), having centrally-located staff development sites, having principals training separately from teachers training (preferably after school hours), and ensuring that all necessary central staff (e.g., program manager, curriculum coordinator, etc.) be available at all training sessions to answer any questions;
- Earlier in the school year, predetermine the experienced S.O.A.R. mentor teachers who are interested in participating, enlist their help in all aspects of program planning and setup (e.g., registration, distribution of materials, campus classroom setup, etc.); and
- Have all curriculum materials ready early and available for distribution.

One district mentor teacher suggested that all teachers be trained together so that they all receive the same generic information. This would prepare all teachers in the case where some teachers are moved from one grade level to another due to class size changes. She also said that it would be helpful if the training included model classrooms with guidance through a regular day of S.O.A.R.

According to one teacher, "Everyone worked together in providing us with meetings that would help us become stronger and yet more effective teachers. Everyday we either had meetings that provided training or meetings that would provide us with answers to any questions we may have had. Anyway you look at it, we were always made clear of our responsibilities to the students, to ourselves (as teachers), and our commitment to the S.O.A.R. program. I leave with powerful, effective knowledge that I will carry on in my upcoming school year as a first time 3rd grade teacher."

MATERIALS

The major complaint of this year's summer program was that many supplies including pencils and paper were not available the first week or longer of S.O.A.R. As one teacher said, "Materials need to be there on the first day of school—No Excuses."

The major complaint of this year's summer program was the lack of or lateness of essential supplies (e.g., pencils and paper) at the beginning of S.O.A.R. Teachers said that they had to scramble for these materials or purchase them with their own money. Miscommunication between program managers and the finance department left some orders unfilled. Teachers did not like excuses because they considered these items an essential part of the program. When paper arrived, it was not the lined writing paper that teachers said they needed; it was unlined copy paper. Books arrived throughout the program and had to be leveled by the mentor teachers, which took time away from the mentor teacher's classroom involvement. Teachers did not feel that this was a good use of the mentor teacher's time.

More materials such as center activities, Big Books, manipulatives, large pocket charts, and reading games were requested by teachers. In addition, teachers said they needed more low-level (alphabet and one word per page) books for the students that do not recognize letters or words. Many teachers who have taught S.O.A.R. before remember the take-home books of previous years and wrote that the take-home books were an important way for students to get additional practice reading and an excellent way for the parent to be involved with the child's reading.

Some teachers suggested that they get an inventory list of materials and supplies that are to be furnished and a list of equipment or materials they might want to bring from their home campus. Broken tape players and the unavailability of equipment such as overhead projectors or easels at the S.O.A.R. site were frustrating to teachers.

While the late arrival of supplies and books was difficult for teachers, the quality of the teaching materials received much praise from teachers. The SAILS and Wright/Rigby books were well liked as were the Spanish *Cancionero* and *Elefonetica* reading materials. Teachers said that there was an abundance of high interest books for guided reading. Some of the curricula included lesson plans, which teachers said was helpful. However, teachers indicated a need for more low-level books for guided and independent reading, Big Books, and materials for literacy centers.

Bilingual teachers asked for additional materials for Spanish language students. Because of the incomplete process of identifying the students who need reading instruction in Spanish, it is difficult to have the appropriate number of Spanish language materials at each campus. With 22% of the 2001 S.O.A.R. students receiving Spanish language instruction, it is critical to the success of the program to have students properly identified before the start of S.O.A.R.

Class Size

> "Having 12 kids was nice. I was able to read with each child for a longer amount of time each day." - S.O.A.R. Teacher

While most teachers said that the ideal class size for S.O.A.R. is 10-12 students, others said there should be no more than 15 because these students who are below grade level really benefit from the smaller classes. Teachers with small classes commented that the low pupil teacher ratio was wonderful. They could see that the program made on impact by improving reading skills of students. They were able to work one-on-one more easily with fewer students. These teachers had from 9-14 students.

Conversely, 33 teachers who had from 15-19 students said that class size was a negative factor. These teachers said that they were not able to see as much student progress as the classes with a lower pupil teacher ratio.

Because S.O.A.R. groups children by grade and language, there was an inequity of class size. For example, 40% of the English language instruction classes and 55% of the Spanish language instruction classes had 15 or more students. Pleasant Hill had the highest overall pupil-teacher ratio of 16 students to 1 teacher while Reilly had only one class of 15 students.

In addition to the need for reading intervention, some students had other special needs. There were some students with severe handicap or complex special needs at S.O.A.R. this year. Many of the students required one-on-one assistance for which S.O.A.R. is not set up. After talking to principals and program managers, it seems there was miscommunication or no communication between the S.O.A.R. coordinators and the special education coordinators prior to S.O.A.R., and some children for whom S.O.A.R. was not appropriate were enrolled. Teachers who worked with these children suggested that the students with complex special needs be in their own class or their own program with certified special education teachers. Teachers say the pace of S.O.A.R. is too fast for some special needs students. The demands on the S.O.A.R. teacher in this situation takes time away from other students in the class, teachers said. In addition, teachers said that they need the IEP (individualized education plan) of any special needs student who is in their class.

Policies and Procedures

> Principals indicated the need for clear, written policies to cover all aspects of the S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS programs.

With the addition of supervision of the new SUCCESS program added to the role of the S.O.A.R. principal, it has become even more important that written procedures for operating the summer programs are needed. It was recommended by the evaluator in 2000 that a policies and procedures manual was needed for S.O.A.R. because principals

and teachers who were seeing inconsistencies in the program had requested a manual for such areas as eligibility, registration, attendance, and discipline.

Of all principals interviewed, only two did not express any problems with having both programs on their campuses. The remainder of the principals reported several common problems, including inconsistencies in the programs' policies and procedures, miscommunication or lack of communication, and differences between the math and language arts curricula. For instance, more specific problems that arose during the summer programs included varying student-teacher ratios, changing rules about attendance, higher frequency of student discipline problems in SUCCESS, and inequalities in student incentives between programs. Principals provided some of the following suggestions for improving summer programs:

- Consistent, written policies for the programs that cover all aspects of summer school;
- Consistent, clear, and timely communication among staffs (central office, campus teams, etc.);
- Similar student incentives between programs;
- Adequate and equal support for both programs at campuses (e.g., in terms of funding, supplies, materials, staffing, etc.);
- Aligned curricula between programs;
- Teacher feedback for both programs; and
- More timely planning before programs begin.

One principal felt that the programs should be held on different campuses (i.e., S.O.A.R. on one and SUCCESS on another). Two principals stated that the way programs were promoted by grade-level ranges was confusing (i.e., rising K-3 for S.O.A.R. versus current 3-5 for SUCCESS), and that this should be changed for next year.

Teachers asked for clear expectations, as stated in the Principles of Learning, for what is required of them (e.g., attending parent night, word walls, materials they need to provide, debriefing meetings) during S.O.A.R. Teachers said that these standards should be universal and the program staff need to "stick to them." An additional issue is the reporting of DRA text reading levels to parents and home campuses for consistency across the program. It seems that some but not all sites completed progress reports for parents during S.O.A.R.

Identification/Eligibility

Some teachers expressed concern that there should be a better process to screen students who are eligible for S.O.A.R. Many of the students who attended S.O.A.R. were well above grade level and there were not enough high-level materials to use. Teachers said that there should be criteria for attending summer school that is used consistently with all students. In addition, some teachers said that the home campus teachers need to report the correct DRA level. Many teachers reported inaccurate or missing DRA levels for students who were recommended for S.O.A.R. One teacher said that there should be one person at each home campus who is responsible to see that all of the information on the application form is entered and correct.

Another teacher reported that the criteria for attending S.O.A.R. was initially set at level 12 for grade 2, but in May teachers were told that students up to level 24 could attend. It was too late to get the word to parents because they had already made plans. To maximize the number of students who can attend, the eligibility requirement should be established early according to this teacher.

Bilingual/Special Needs

Teachers said that they need to know more about the students they teach in S.O.A.R. such as language of instruction, special needs status, other early reading interventions (i.e., Reading Recovery or literacy group). Some teachers indicated that they started teaching a student in one language (English or Spanish) only to find out later that the student should have reading instruction in the other language. This is a loss of valuable instruction time. Teachers suggest that the language of instruction, special needs, and previous interventions be included on the registration form as required fields before a student can be enrolled.

Attendance

An attendance policy needs to be set and enforced consistently across all S.O.A.R. sites, according to teachers and principals. SUCCESS had a strict policy about attendance while the S.O.A.R. policy was that students could attend class if they showed up. This presented problems for parents with students in both programs where the older child (in SUCCESS) was dismissed for poor attendance, but the younger child (in S.O.A.R.) could continue. There were reports of these policies being implemented differently at the S.O.A.R./SUCCESS campuses.

The attendance issue needs to be addressed. According to some teachers, parents should not be able to come and go to summer school as they please. There should be a commitment and they should be given only so many absences and they are out. Teachers suggest that parents could plan their family vacation after summer school.

Behavior

Several students were dismissed from S.O.A.R. for behavior problems, but there was no consistent approach across campuses. Each principal could deal with the problems as they chose. Some teachers said that there should be defined guidelines for student behavior problems.

Daily Operations of S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS

Principals agreed that the registration process for S.O.A.R. and SUCCESS need improvement to better serve students.

Unanimously, principals responded that the student registration process for S.O.A.R./SUCCESS had complications and needed improvement. In all but one case, principals reported that the numbers of students pre-registered for the program were overestimated as compared to the numbers of students who actually showed up to attend the program. This caused complications with staffing (e.g., having too many teachers in

one grade level but not another, or not having enough Bilingual/ESL teachers) and materials (e.g., not having bilingual materials available when bilingual students were enrolled). Principals added that often the pre-registration information for children was in error or missing, such as whether the student was limited English proficient (LEP), special education needs, and whether the student had been retained from going to the next grade level. There were reports of registration forms not being filled out properly or reviewed on-site. Other on-site problems with registration included a lack of school- and academic-related information about the children (e.g., no academic or language test information, no pre-determined need for attending summer program, etc.). Other principals indicated that the inaccurate pre-registration lists also did not match transportation lists, so corrections had to be made to coordinate bus transportation. One principal suggested adding an extra day before the S.O.A.R. program starts for any late registrations so that this process will not interfere with the limited number of instructional days of the program.

Staffing Changes After the First Week of the Program

Almost every principal reported that staffing changes were necessary during or after the first week of the program, and that these changes were due mostly to the errors in the expected versus actual numbers of students showing up for S.O.A.R. For example, some principals had to find bilingual teachers because the number of bilingual students had been underestimated. Several principals also noted a need for more support staff (e.g., teaching aides, monitors, etc.), including those that are bilingual. In some cases, changes had to be made in teaching staff because there were too many teachers at one grade level but not enough at another.

Transportation

Principals noted that some of the following difficulties with bus transportation included: late buses, transportation lists that did not match S.O.A.R. school rosters, and unfamiliar bus routes for some bus drivers. In addition, parents reported that on some days buses would not show up. In some cases, the routing from one neighborhood to another or from one school to another was not efficient.

Several principals reported that students showed up at her campus on the first day who were not on the S.O.A.R. site list, but who had letters from transportation showing that the children were assigned to that site. Transportation had routed children by address, not by feeder school. This created problems on the first day because the school did not have any paper work on these children. However, several principals indicated that the bus driver staff and pickup schedules were fine, and only the routing caused some difficulty initially.

Food Service

Most principals reported that the food service for breakfast and lunch went very well during the summer program. The meals and staff were "wonderful" and "great" said several principals. Two principals noted that extra staff were needed for cafeteria monitoring.

Extended Care

Extended-care programs were available at some but not all summer school locations. Two after-school programs most commonly mentioned by principals were Extend-A-Care for Kids program and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department outdoor program. Only a few problems were noted in coordinating the summer program with the extended-care programs. Most commonly mentioned was the problem of a lack of space when sharing the same school site (building, grounds) with the extended-care program. Another problem noted by one principal was that because some children were enrolled late for S.O.A.R., the extended-care program had reached capacity and therefore had to turn the children away. Some campus principals said that they wish they could have offered extended care at their site rather than transporting children to other sites.

Schedule

Many teachers commented that they liked the daily schedule components that matched the balanced literacy model. The structure of the set daily schedule was good for the students and teachers, they said. Many expressed appreciation for being able to practice the balanced literacy model with the help of the mentor teachers and other teachers who were using the model. The program emphasized reading and writing with many opportunities daily for reading and did not include "fluff," according to one teacher.

Use of Planned Daily Lessons

Daily lessons were prepared for S.O.A.R. teachers this year. Although there was some confusion about the lessons, many teachers said that they were helpful. One teacher said that it was advertised that lesson plans for S.O.A.R. would be prepared and she/he never saw them. It seems that the information about where they could be found and how to use them was not shared with all teachers.

Almost all principals commented that the planned daily lessons in the program helped because they were a timesaving resource that provided a consistent flow and structure for teachers and students. One principal stated that the excellence of the curriculum and planned lessons helped in recruiting teachers for the program. In addition, several principals noted that some teachers said they would take what they had learned back to their own classrooms. However, some principals pointed out some drawbacks with the planned lessons. For instance, although the lessons were a good starting point, there were some teachers who had to make modifications. Several principals noted that some teachers wanted to cover more than one book per week as prescribed for SUCCESS. Guided reading lessons still had to be planned for students. Another principal reported that a teacher saw a need for more materials to work with non-readers. One principal stated that SUCCESS plans were more scripted and less flexible than the S.O.A.R. plans, which impacted the teacher's ability to match materials to the different skill levels of the students. One principal suggested that more books, writing, variety, and flexibility would help improve the plans, especially as it applies to SUCCESS.

Most mentor teachers agreed that the planned daily lessons provided in the program were a timesaver for teachers, enabling the teachers to have the necessary framework from which to build instruction. Students benefited because they were given

more valuable instructional time. Some of the mentor teachers mentioned a few shortcomings in the planned daily lessons, ranging from comments that the planned lessons were too structured or scripted to comments that the lessons were not detailed enough. Some felt the S.O.A.R. plans needed more work while others indicated that the SUCCESS plans needed improvement. One suggestion made was to add more lessons for students at lower reading levels, more resources for literacy centers, and more instructions for word walls. One mentor noted that in S.O.A.R., the teachers used other books in addition to SAILS books, so there was still some lesson plan creation required.

APPENDIX D: TEACHER SURVEY

Teachers at each of the S.O.A.R. sites were invited to respond to a multiple-choice survey about various aspects of the S.O.A.R. program including: training; the DRA; class size; clear expectations; planned lessons; and assistance from the mentor teacher. Eighty-eight percent (n=140) of teachers responded to the survey.

As in 2000, teachers expressed strong appreciation for the support and feedback they received from mentor teachers. In response to the statement, "The mentor teacher at my campus assisted me in providing instruction to meet the needs of below grade level readers," the teachers gave their highest overall rating (mean response of 4.5 based on a 5 point scale).

Teachers expressed the least agreement with the statement that the number of students in S.O.A.R. classrooms was conducive to providing a high level of instruction for each student. The overall mean response for this statement was 3.2. Forty-three percent of all S.O.A.R. classrooms had 15 or more students in their classrooms. Bilingual class size was generally higher than the English class size. Fifty-five percent of bilingual classrooms had 15 or more students while 40% of English classrooms had 15 or more students.

When examining the results by school, Winn teachers offered the most positive responses overall to the questions about S.O.A.R. 2001. Mean responses to all six survey questions from the 15 participating Winn teachers were above 3.5 which indicates general agreement.

By contrast, teachers at Govalle had several areas of concern. The mean responses to all six statements on the survey were 3.2 or less, which indicates a general disagreement. See the following page for a complete list of mean responses to the teacher survey by campus and across the twelve campuses.

Comments about the strengths of the 2001 S.O.A.R. program made by teachers include the following:

- "This was a great learning experience for me as a new teacher. I appreciate the opportunity."
- "Being able to provide students with as many reading experiences as possible was a strength."
- "I really believe that the balanced literacy approach to teaching is very effective. The kids seem to be very interested in centers and guided reading."
- "I truly feel that we have all helped to make a difference in the children's lives. I appreciate all of the supplies. Keep up the good work and resources."
- "Every teacher should teach summer school. I learned to put the balanced literacy program into practice."
- "Many materials were available. The materials, books, tapes, etc., were excellent. The students loved coming to summer school."

APPENDIX D CONTINUED

Mean Responses to S.O.A.R. Teacher Survey by Campus and Across Campuses, 2001

Survey Questions	Black-shear (n=6)	Govalle (n=6)	Graham (n=16)	Joslin (n=13)	Linder (n=13)	Mathews (n=6)	McBee (n=15)	Palm (n=15)	Pleasant Hill (n=19)	Reilly (n=10)	Sims (n=6)	Winn (n=15)	All (n=140)
1) The S.O.A.R. training sessions provided useful information that I could use to teach students who are low in literacy learning.	3.8	**2.7**	4.1	4.2	3.6	3.8	4.1	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.6	4.2
2) The DRA end-of-year reading levels for eligible S.O.A.R. students provided by classroom teachers were appropriate levels for beginning summer reading instruction.	3.5	**3.2**	3.7	3.6	**3.1**	3.8	3.5	**2.8**	4.0	**2.8**	**3.0**	3.6	**3.4**
3) The number of students in my S.O.A.R. classroom was conducive to providing highly effective instruction for each student.	4.0	**3.2**	4.3	3.5	4.2	3.7	**3.4**	3.9	**2.4**	4.1	4.3	4.0	**3.2**
4) I was provided clear expectations for student progress during S.O.A.R. 2001.	4.0	**2.5**	**3.4**	4.2	4.1	3.7	4.4	4.5	4.2	3.6	4.3	4.4	4.0
5) The lessons prepared for S.O.A.R. teachers this year helped me implement the balanced literacy model effectively.	3.0	**2.2**	4.3	**3.0**	3.5	3.5	4.1	4.4	3.4	**2.8**	3.7	4.5	3.7
6) The mentor teacher at my campus assisted me in providing instruction to meet the needs of below-grade-level readers.	4.5	**3.2**	4.1	4.8	4.9	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.7	4.7	4.5
Total	3.8	**2.8**	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.8	4.0	4.1	3.7	3.6	4.0	4.3	3.8

Note: Scale is as follows: 5=Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3=Unsure; 2=Disagree; and 1=Strongly Disagree

Mean Responses below 3.5 are highlighted to indicate responses with lesser agreement.

APPENDIX E

Mean Responses to Parent Survey by Language, 2001

Survey Questions	English (n=689)	Spanish (n=292)	All (N=981)
1. The S.O.A.R. program was good for my child.	4.5	4.7	4.6
2. My child's reading has improved during this four-week summer reading program	4.2	4.5	4.3
3. I understood what was expected of my child during S.O.A.R.	4.1	4.5	4.2
4. I was invited to participate in my child's S.O.A.R. program.	3.9	4.3	4.0
5. My child's bus was on time.	4.1	3.8	3.9
6. If my child's S.O.A.R. campus did not have childcare, my child would not have been able to attend.	3.4	4.5	3.9

Note: Scale is as follows: 5=Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3=Unsure; 2=Disagree; and 1=Strongly Disagree

Mean Responses below 3.5 are highlighted to indicate responses with lesser agreement.

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